

The “Enhanced” Nurse Licensure Compact, continued.  
by Kathy Weinberg, Executive Director

In the last volume of the Iowa Board of Nursing Newsletter I introduced the “Enhanced” Nurse Licensure Compact as approved by the members of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) in May of 2015.

As a refresher, the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) is an interstate compact. It allows a nurse to have one multistate license in their primary state of residency and permits the nurse to practice in other member states both physically and electronically subject to each state’s practice laws.

The benefits of the “Enhanced” NLC are the following:

- A nurse has the ability to practice in multiple states with one license.
- The compact reduces regulatory requirements by removing the necessity for obtaining a license in each state.
- The compact clarifies a nurse’s authority to practice in multiple states via telehealth, which in turn increases patient access to care and provides continuity of care.
- The compact provides member states with the authority to facilitate a discipline case across state lines.

One of the driving forces to adopt the “Enhanced” NLC is that all states joining the compact will require uniform licensure requirements. This is one of the following elements which reinforces the fact that the “Enhanced” NLC is safe and efficient:

- The current NLC had been operational and successful for more than 15 years.
- All the safeguards that are built into the current state licensing process are required before a nurse is issued a multistate license.
- The “Enhanced” NLC has uniform licensure requirements so that all states can be confident the nurses practicing within the NLC have met a set of minimum requirements, regardless of the home state in which they are licensed.
- Although less than one percent of U.S. nurses ever require discipline by a board of nursing (BON), in the rare event of any disciplinary issues, swift

action can be taken by the BON regardless of the state where the nurse is licensed or practices. If a nurse is disciplined, the information is placed into the national database, NURSYS®.

The following are the uniform licensure requirements that a nurse must meet to be issued a multistate license, regardless of their home state:

- Meet the home state's qualifications.
- Graduate from a qualifying education program.
- Passed the NCLEX-RN® or NCLEX-PN® exam (or predecessor exam).
- Have no active discipline on a license.
- Submit to a criminal background check and have no prior state or federal felony convictions.
- Not be currently enrolled in an alternative program.
- Have a valid U.S. Social Security number.

I would imagine that nurses presently holding a multistate license are asking themselves how the uniform licensing requirements of the “Enhanced” NLC affects their licensure.

The “Enhanced NLC has a grandfathering clause to address this question. A nurse holding a home state multistate license on the “Enhanced” compact's effective date may retain and renew the license provided that:

- A nurse who changes primary state of residence after the “Enhanced” NLC's effective date must meet requirements to obtain a multistate license from a new home state.

Example – Nurse Nancy holds a multistate license in Iowa, her primary state of residence. She moves to Missouri, also a compact state, but she has a history of a felony which would now prohibit her from receiving a multistate license in Missouri. Nurse Nancy may receive a single state license in Missouri if she meets the laws and rules set forth in Missouri for licensure.

- A nurse who fails to satisfy the requirements due to a disqualifying event occurring after the compact's effective date is ineligible to retain or renew a multistate license.

Example – Nurse John holds a multistate license in Iowa, his primary state of residence. The Iowa Board of Nursing is informed that Nurse John has been convicted of a felony, he would no longer be eligible for a multistate license.

What is next for Iowa and adopting the “Enhanced” NLC? The adoption of the “Enhanced” NLC will take legislative action: We must rescind the old and enact the new. During the 2016 year the goal is to educate nurses, legislators and all stakeholders concerning the “Enhanced” NLC and introduce language in the 2017 legislative session.

The effective date of the “Enhanced” NLC legislation is determined by either 26 states joining the compact or by the date December 31, 2018.

- Example 1: If 26 states join by January 1, 2017, the “Enhanced” NLC becomes effective.
- Example 2: If only 20 states have joined by December 31, 2018, the “Enhanced” NLC still becomes effective.

In conclusion, it is important that all nurses in Iowa become educated on the “Enhanced” NLC in the coming year. You need to talk to your legislator. You need to talk to each other. Iowa has been part of the present compact for 15 years and for continued mobility of nurses and adequate access to care for our patients, we need to adopt the “Enhanced” NLC to continue what we started in the year 2000.

I would like to wish you all a Happy Nurses Week! Thank you for your dedication to the nursing profession. Kathy Weinberg

Information from the National Council State Boards of Nursing. (NCSBN). (2015). *The national council state boards of nursing (NCSBN) power point on the enhanced nurse licensure compact and APRN compact.*